

THE BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA

Quarterly

News-Letter

December 1938

Published four times a year for its members by The Book Club of California, 110 Sutter St., San Francisco, Cal. Edited by Oscar Lewis

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A RESUME OF THE YEAR

by ALFRED SUTRO, President

AS THE present year, the twenty-sixth in the Club's history, approaches its close, a brief review of our recent activities will be of interest.

During 1938 three new books were published, bringing the total since the Club's founding to fifty-five. In April appeared *Mark Twain's Letter to William Bowen*, with a foreword by Clara Clemens Gabrilowitsch, Twain's daughter. Three hundred and twenty-five copies of this attractive little item were printed by The Grabhorn

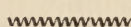
Press. *A Leaf from Caxton's Polycronicon*, also printed by the Grabhorns, was issued in July. This publication, each copy of which contains a leaf of Caxton's printing, proved to be one of the most popular works ever issued by the Club. It is to be regretted that there were only two hundred and ninety-seven copies available, because the demand much exceeded the supply. The third 1938 publication is the Club's annual Christmas book, this year Clarence King's *The Helmet of Mambrino*, with a foreword by Francis P. Farquhar. The edition is three hundred and fifty copies, and it is the first book to be printed for the Club by the University of California Press. The first two of the 1938 publications went out of print soon after publication; it is likely that all copies of the third will also be promptly sold.

The keepsakes series for 1938, "Coast and Valley Towns of Early California"—the fifth—was also well received by members. For this series the Club returned to the form of the first two keepsakes; that is, to twelve folders, distributed monthly. For the success of this, as of each former series, the Club is indebted to the co-operation of all those who had a hand in its production; in particular, to the collectors who permitted their early lithographs of California towns to be reproduced, to the authors who wrote the historical texts, and to the twelve California printers whose craftsmanship gave the series the typographical interest and variety that are one of its major distinctions.

The number of members on the roll is usually an accurate gauge of the Club's condition and prospects. During the past six years, the membership has increased to about five hundred and seventy-five. As has been pointed out before, a full roll of six hundred, however,

is highly desirable to the Club's proper functioning. One of the objectives of each member for 1939 should be to help bring the membership up to the six hundred mark.

The close of another year finds the Club in sound condition, carrying on its activities with efficiency and continuing to enjoy the interest and ever-generous support of its members. Our Club is the oldest established book collectors' organization in the West and the largest in point of membership. May it continue to hold that position.



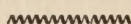
MAMBRINO'S HELMET

ANNOUNCEMENTS of the Club's annual Christmas book, *The Helmet of Mambrino*, were sent out a few days ago. The number of orders already on hand make it clear that Clarence King's sketch of barber's basins, Don Quixote and rural Spain is going to be in brisk demand. In addition to subscribing for their own collections many are ordering extra copies for gifts.

Because of King's long association with the state, and because the *Helmet* is written in the form of a letter to that picturesque San Franciscan Horace C. Cutter, the book has a definite California interest in addition to its interest to collectors in general. Thus, it makes a particularly appropriate Club publication. It has a further interest in that it is the first book to be printed for the Club by the University of California Press. Those who have seen the publication agree that in design and workmanship it fully justifies the enviable reputation this press has won in recent years.

A really charming little book, *The Helmet of Mambrino* consists of fifty-two pages, size 5 x 8 inches, with title-page in three colors and binding of decorated boards with vellum back stamped in gold, with a slipcase. The price — \$2.00 — should add to its popularity as a gift book.

The edition being limited to three hundred and fifty copies, it is desirable that orders be forwarded promptly.



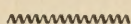
GIFT MEMBERSHIPS

EACH DECEMBER for the past several years members have been given the opportunity to present a Club membership as a holiday remembrance. The appropriateness of such a gift to anyone with an enthusiasm for book collecting or for California history or literature has come to be widely recognized, and each year a larger number of members have availed themselves of this service.

The procedure is simple. Merely write the Club giving the name and address of the person to whom you are presenting membership. Shortly before Christmas the recipient will be sent a gift membership card stating that you have presented him (or her) with a Club membership for the year 1939. With the card will be sent a complete set of this year's keepsakes series: "Coast and Valley Towns of Early California." In addition he will receive the benefits of membership during 1939, including the News-Letter, the privilege of purchasing the Club's publications, and a full set of the 1939 keepsakes.

For all this, you will be billed—in January—for the regular annual dues: \$10.00. Several members have

stated that this gift membership plan has solved the problem of finding an "extra special" gift for a book lover. Perhaps it will solve a similar problem for you.



WILLIAM DOXEY AND "LES JEUNES"

by WALLACE KIBBEE

Editor's Note: This paper on one of the notable California publishing ventures of the '90s is a result of the author's long-standing interest in the publications issued under the Doxey imprint. Mr. Kibbee states that he will be grateful for information concerning any Doxey publication that is not included in the following incomplete check list.

IT IS refreshing in this commercial age to pause and recall an enterprise of an earlier day that had not "avarice of reward" as its motivating principle. Such an enterprise was that celebrated local publication, *The Lark*, which first burst on the startled gaze of San Franciscans in the middle '90s and which before its brief career was ended was being read and quoted all over the country.

The Lark, an unpretentious and altogether unorthodox little periodical, first appeared in May 1895. It was published for twenty-four consecutive months, the final number appearing in April 1897. The following from the first issue is the keynote of its purposes and policy:

"An illustrated monthly magazine issued by *Les Jeunes* in San Francisco, conducted by Gelett Burgess, and published by William Doxey at 631 Market Street in San Francisco.

"A new note—some of the joy of the morning—set here for the refreshment of our souls in the heat of mid-day. With no more serious intention than to be gay—to sing a song and tell a story."

Besides acting as "conductor," Burgess contributed drawings and verses. Among the writers were Bruce Porter, K. Porter Garnett, Dynas Powis, Clinton Brooks Burgiss, Karl Howard, Morgan Shepard, one who styled himself "Pedro L. A.", Yone Noguchi, Carolyn Wells and Juliet Wilbor Tompkins. Contributing artists were L. Maynard Dixon, Ernest Peixotto, Willis Polk, Florence Lundborg, Herbert Van Vlack, Reginald Rix, Newton Thorp, Arthur Atkins, Fred Yates and William Keith.

It was of course in *The Lark* that the nonsense classic, "The Purple Cow," first appeared. Less widely known is Burgess' lament, which followed a few issues later:

Ah, yes, I wrote the "Purple Cow,"
I'm sorry, now, I wrote it;
But I can tell you, anyhow
I'll kill you if you quote it.

The little publication was something quite new in American journalism and it was soon being widely circulated and discussed. Not all the comment was favorable. A writer in the *Boston Herald*, frankly puzzled, called *The Lark*: "A queer species of bird, apparently meant to be taken seriously, though as odd as any ornithological specimen in the museum." The *Philadelphia Times* stated: "The young men who publish *The Lark* have ideas of their own. *The Lark* is smart and funny in a way quite its own, and it is also capable of serious flight and of musical notes that are clear enough to be heard around the continent."

The Lark continued to be published for two years, then, although it was still enjoying wide popularity, its sponsors voluntarily closed its career. After the last reg-

ular number appeared a special issue called the *Epilark*, the final words of which were these lines from Henley:

So be my passing—
My task accomplished and the long day done,
My wages taken, and in my heart
Some late Lark singing,
Let me be gathered to the quiet West,
The sundown splendid and serene.

Files of *The Lark* have been much sought after by collectors. As a consequence most of the existing sets of the little periodical have long since disappeared from circulation and are to be encountered only on the library shelves of their fortunate owners.

A bit more accessible to those who fancy the productions of the same time and place are the titles in another of William Doxey's publishing ventures, *The Lark Classics*. This was a series of small volumes, very moderate in price, tastefully bound in leather and legibly printed on paper of good quality. The following were issued.

I. RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM. Translated into English Verse by Edward Fitzgerald; comprising the first and fourth editions, with notes; and additional poems by Justin Huntley McCarthy, Porter Garnett, and others.

II. BARRACK ROOM BALLADS, RECESSIONAL, AND OTHER POEMS, by Rudyard Kipling.

III. DEPARTMENTAL DITTIES, THE VAMPIRE, AND OTHER POEMS, by Rudyard Kipling.

IV. A LOVER'S LITANY, by Eric Mackay.

V. THE STORY OF MY HEART, by Richard Jefferies.

VI. THE LOVE SONNETS OF PROTEUS, by Wilfred Scawen Blunt.

VII. BALLADS IN BLUE CHINA, by Andrew Lang.

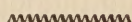
VIII. THE ODES OF ANACREON.

In addition to the above, Doxey launched the Idle Hours Series, of which two titles appeared:

IDLE HOURS IN THE LIBRARY, by William Henry Hudson. Contents: London Life in Shakespeare's Time; Pepys and His Diary; Two Novelists of the English Restoration; A Glimpse of Bohemia.

A QUIET CORNER IN A LIBRARY, by William Henry Hudson. Contents: King Colley (Colley Cibber); The Plays of Two Great Novelists; From Congreve to Sheridan; Little Davy (David Garrick).

William Doxey was an Englishman by birth whose bookshop in the old Palace Hotel building was one of the cultural centers of San Francisco during the two decades prior to 1906. It was a favorite gathering place not only of writers and artists but of all those who wished to keep in touch with the literary and artistic movements of an active and fruitful period. When the story of literary San Francisco of the '90s comes to be written some of its most entertaining pages will surely center about the shop of William Doxey, publisher and bookseller.



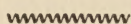
ELECTED TO MEMBERSHIP

NEW MEMBERS elected since September 1, 1938:

<i>Member</i>		<i>Sponsor</i>
Walter Beam, Jr.	Piedmont, Cal.	Miss Rosalind A. Keep
Mrs. L. A. Bossana	San Francisco, Cal.	Mrs. J. E. Johnson
Charles Caldwell Dobie	San Francisco, Cal.	John A. Sutro
Mrs. Alexander Field	San Francisco, Cal.	Alfred Sutro
Irving Frohloch	San Francisco, Cal.	T. M. Lilienthal
Joseph A. Greenway	Richmond, Cal.	John Howell
Arthur Mayers	Los Angeles, Cal.	Oscar Moss
Mrs. W. Murray Smith	Lemon Grove, Cal.	Oscar Lewis

The roll is still about twenty-five short of its maximum of six hundred. It would be pleasant to be able to

announce a full list in the next News-Letter. Members will confer a distinct favor by forwarding the names of collectors likely to be interested in membership.

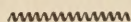


THE 1939 KEEPSAKES

THE CLUB'S sixth series of keepsakes will differ from the five that preceded it in that it will relate not to one subject but to several. Like the 1936 and 1937 series, this one will consist of six pamphlets, which will be issued bi-monthly. The parts will be the same size as those of the two earlier pamphlets series and, like them, will be produced by six well-known Western fine presses.

So much for their similarity to the earlier keepsakes. Coming now to the point where the 1939 series will differ from the others, the most important difference is that, as already stated, the pamphlets will not all relate to one general subject. The motto of this series will be variety; the various pamphlets will reach members with their subjects unannounced and the appearance of each will therefore be in the nature of a surprise—the Club hopes a pleasant one. By making this, in a manner of speaking, a "themeless" series the Club will be able to include in it a number of items of uncommon interest that did not fit into any series but nonetheless deserve to be far more widely known.

Most of the subjects of the six pamphlets have been selected, but to preserve the surprise element these will not be announced in advance. The series itself has been tentatively titled: "Pamphlet Miscellany." Part One will be ready about February first.



MEMORIAL

THE FOLLOWING members died during 1938:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Elected</i>
H. Rushton Fairclough	1935
Paul Goldsmith	1935
Mrs. George M. Millard	1920
D. C. Norcross	1913
Howard J. Ransohoff	1938
Mrs. Mary Spoor	1935
William C. Van Antwerp	1930
Edgar Walter	1913
Waldemar Young	1930

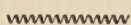
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## COAST AND VALLEY TOWNS

SINCE THE appearance of the September News-Letter, the Club's fifth keepsakes series has been brought to completion by the distribution of the final three parts. These were: October: Benicia: Text by Rosalind A. Keep: Printer: The Eucalyptus Press; November: San Diego: Text by Franklin Walker: Printer: The Plantin Press; December: San Jose: Text by Mrs. Fremont Older: Printer: The Gillick Press.

As members know, the twelve folders in this series were issued in editions of seven hundred copies. Of these, six hundred were to supply the members and the remaining one hundred were reserved for those who wished duplicate sets for gift purposes. Most of these have already been subscribed; the remainder are avail-

able (to members only) at \$5.00 per set. Slipcases are also available and are priced at \$2.00 for all-cloth covering and \$3.00 for cloth with morocco back.



### MISCELLANY

¶ At the November meeting of the Club's directors James K. Moffitt was elected to fill a vacancy on the board caused by the death of William C. Van Antwerp. Mr. Moffitt has long been an active supporter of the Club's activities, and the Club is fortunate in having the benefit of his wide experience as a collector in the future direction of its affairs. The full board now consists of: Alfred Sutro, Albert M. Bender, Flodden W. Heron, E. V. Weller, C. O. G. Miller, Allen L. Chickering and James K. Moffitt.

¶ Plans for a new office for the Club, or for a refitting of the present quarters, have been under consideration for some weeks but no definite decision has yet been reached. Such changes as will be made, however, will be completed early next year, so that out-of-town members who visit San Francisco during the Golden Gate International Exposition will find the Club installed in quarters less antiquated than those that have served since 1922.

¶ Club members, as well as collectors in general, will be pleased to learn that Western fine printing is to be adequately represented in the coming Exposition, which opens in February. A commodious hall in the California Building—tentatively called the Hall of Printing—has been assigned for such an exhibit and a state-wide committee is now engaged in selecting material for what will undoubtedly be the most comprehensive and interesting showing of the works of California printers, past and present, ever brought together.

The Officers  
and Board of Directors  
of  
The Book Club of California  
Wish the Members  
A Merry Christmas and  
a Happy New Year

